

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An image sensor readout circuit, comprising:

a column line for receiving a plurality of analog pixel and analog reset signals; and

a binning circuit coupled to said column line, wherein said binning circuit combines a predetermined plurality of analog pixel signals from a plurality of pixels and outputs them on a first output line, and combines a predetermined plurality of analog reset signals from a plurality of pixels and outputs them on a second output line.

2. (Currently Amended) The readout circuit of claim 1, wherein said binning circuit comprises:

a first sample circuit, said first sample circuit storing ~~[[the]]~~ said plurality of analog pixel signals; and

a second sample circuit, said second sample circuit storing ~~[[the]]~~ said plurality of analog reset signals.

3. (Currently Amended) The readout circuit of claim 2, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ said first sample circuit comprises:

a first plurality of sample switches; and

a first plurality of capacitive elements, wherein each of said first plurality of sample switches are coupled to a respective one of said first plurality of capacitive elements, said first plurality of capacitive elements being further coupled to the first output line.

4. (Currently Amended) The readout circuit of claim 3, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ said second sample circuit comprises:

a second plurality of sample switches; and

a second plurality of capacitive elements, wherein each of said second plurality of sample switches are coupled to a respective one of said second plurality of capacitive elements, said second plurality of capacitive elements being further coupled to the second output line.

5. (Currently Amended) The readout circuit of claim 4, wherein ~~[[the]]~~ said first and second plurality of sample switches and capacitive elements comprise an even number of sample switches and capacitive elements.

6. (Currently Amended) A binning circuit for an image sensor, comprising:

a column line for receiving analog pixel and analog reset signals of an active pixel sensor;

a first sample circuit coupled to said column line, said first sample circuit storing a plurality of analog pixel signals from a plurality of pixels;

a second sample circuit coupled to said column line, said second sample circuit storing a plurality of analog reset signals from a plurality of pixels;

a first switch coupled to [[the]] said first sample circuit and to a first output line, said first switch being controlled to combine [[the]] said plurality of analog pixel signals and output [[the]] said combined pixel signals on [[the]] said first output line; and

a second switch, coupled to [[the]] said second sample circuit and to a second output line, said second switch being controlled to combine [[the]] said plurality of analog reset signals and output [[the]] said combined reset signal on [[the]] said second output line.

7. (Currently Amended) The binning circuit of claim 6, wherein [[the]] said first sample circuit comprises:

a first plurality of sample switches; and

a first plurality of capacitive elements, wherein each of said first plurality of sample switches are coupled to a respective one of said first plurality of capacitive elements, said first plurality of capacitive elements being further coupled to the first output line.

8. (Currently Amended) The binning circuit of claim 7, wherein [[the]] said second sample circuit comprises:

a second plurality of sample switches; and

a second plurality of capacitive elements, wherein each of said second plurality of sample switches are coupled to a respective one of said second plurality of capacitive elements, said second plurality of capacitive elements being further coupled to the second output line.

9. (Currently Amended) The binning circuit of claim 8, wherein [[the]] said first and second plurality of sample switches and capacitive elements comprise an even number of sample switches and capacitive elements.

10. (Currently Amended) A method of binning [[the]] an output of an active image sensor, comprising:

sampling analog output signals from a plurality of pixels of [[the]] said sensor according to a first predetermined sequence;

sampling analog reset signals from a plurality of pixels of [[the]] said sensor according to a second predetermined sequence;

combining and outputting all sampled analog output signals on a first line; and

combining and outputting all sampled analog reset signals on a second line.

11. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein said step of sampling said analog output signals comprises storing each analog output signal in a respective capacitive element of a first plurality of capacitive elements according to [[the]] said first predetermined sequence.

12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein said step of sampling said analog reset signals comprises storing each analog reset signal in a respective capacitive element of a second plurality of capacitive elements according to [[the]] said second predetermined sequence.

13. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein [[the]] said first and second predetermined sequences are determined by a less-than-full pixel resolution condition.

14. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein [[the]] said first and second predetermined sequences further comprise interpolating different row output and reset signals from a column readout circuit in said active image sensor.

15. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 14, wherein [[the]] said predetermined sequence further comprises sampling identical colors from different rows from a column readout circuit in said active image sensor.

16. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein [[the]] said first and second predetermined sequences further comprise interpolating different column readout circuits in said active image sensor.

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10, wherein [[the]] said first and second predetermined sequence is determined by a Bayer pattern.

18. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 10, ~~wherein at least one of said first and second acts of combining comprises~~ further comprising:

subtracting said ~~sampled~~ combined analog output signal from said combined analog reset signal signals.

19. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 18 further comprising:

calculating a color separation value of said sampled signals of said sensor.

20. (Currently Amended) A charge-domain readout circuit comprising:

a plurality of column readout circuits each of which sample and ~~[[store]]~~ combine multiple pixel signals and reset signal values of a plurality of pixels of an active pixel sensor, wherein each column readout circuit is associated with a respective column of sensors in ~~[[the]]~~ said active pixel sensor;

a first bus for receiving pixel signal values stored by a selected one of ~~[[the]]~~ said column readout circuits; and

a second bus for receiving ~~[[the]]~~ said reset signal values stored by a selected one of ~~[[the]]~~ said column readout circuits.

21. (Currently Amended) The circuit of claim 20, wherein each column readout circuit ~~includes~~ comprises a plurality of sample and hold circuits.

22. (Currently Amended) The circuit of claim 21, wherein each sample and hold circuit comprises:

a plurality of charge storage elements; and

a plurality of first switches, each of said plurality of switches being coupled to a respective one of said plurality of charge storage elements, wherein said plurality of switches can be selectively enabled to sample a signal from a sensor in ~~[[the]]~~ said array to be stored by ~~[[the]]~~ said charge storage element.

23. (Currently Amended) The circuit of claim 22, wherein each column readout circuit comprises a plurality of second switches which can be selectively enabled to hold one side of [[the]] said charge storage elements at a reference voltage when a corresponding one of [[the]] said first switches is enabled to sample a value from a sensor.

24. (Currently Amended) The circuit of claim 22, wherein each column readout circuit ~~includes~~ comprises a switch that can be selectively enabled to short together one side of each ~~charge storing element~~ plurality of charge storage elements.

25. (Currently Amended) The circuit of claim 20, further comprising column switches coupled between each of [[the]] said column readout circuits, wherein [[the]] said column switches can be selectively enabled to couple together [[the]] said stored pixel signal and reset signal values present on [[the]] said column of sensors in [[an]] said active pixel sensor.

26. (Currently Amended) A method of reading out values from active pixel sensors in an array of sensors, ~~the method~~ comprising:

selecting multiple rows of sensors whose values are to be read out;

storing correlated double sampled values for a plurality of sensors in [[the]] said selected rows, wherein [[the]] said values for each sensor are stored

by a respective readout circuit associated with a column in ~~the~~ said array in which ~~the~~ said sensor is located;

combining ~~the~~ said stored signals; and

sensing ~~the~~ said stored values associated with ~~the~~ said plurality of sensors in ~~the~~ said selected rows using an operational amplifier-based charge sensing circuit that is common to ~~the~~ said readout circuits.

27. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 26 wherein ~~the~~ said act of storing correlated double sampled values ~~includes~~ comprises sampling and storing a signal value of a sensor and sampling and storing a reset value of ~~the~~ said sensor.

28. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 27 including setting a reference voltage on first sides of respective ones of a plurality of capacitive elements and subsequently coupling ~~the~~ said signal and reset values to second sides of ~~the~~ said respective ones of a plurality of capacitive elements.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein setting a reference voltage ~~includes~~ comprises providing ~~the~~ said reference voltage ~~from~~ to ~~the~~ said common operational amplifier-based charge sensing circuit.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 29 wherein sensing ~~[[the]]~~ said stored values ~~includes~~ comprises using a crowbar switch to force charge stored in each respective readout circuit onto feedback capacitive elements in ~~[[the]]~~ said operational amplifier-based charge sensing circuit.

31. (Currently Amended) A processing system, comprising:

a processing circuit;

an imaging circuit coupled to said processing circuit, said imaging circuit having a charge-domain readout circuit, said readout circuit comprising:

a plurality of column readout circuits each of which ~~[[can]]~~ sample and ~~[[store]]~~ combine multiple pixel signal and reset values of a plurality of pixels of an active pixel sensor, wherein each column readout circuit is associated with a respective column of sensors in an active pixel sensor;

a first bus for receiving pixel signal values stored by a selected one of ~~[[the]]~~ said column readout circuits; and

a second bus for receiving ~~[[the]]~~ said pixel reset values stored by a selected one of ~~[[the]]~~ said column readout circuits.

32. (Currently Amended) The processing system of claim 31, wherein each column readout circuit ~~includes~~ comprises a plurality of sample and hold circuits.

33. (Currently Amended) The processing system of claim 32, wherein each sample and hold circuit comprises:

a plurality of charge storage elements; and

a plurality of first switches, each of said plurality of switches being coupled to a respective one of said plurality of charge storage elements, wherein said plurality of switches can be selectively enabled to sample a signal from a sensor in ~~[[the]]~~ said array to be stored by ~~[[the]]~~ said charge storage element.

34. (Currently Amended) The processing system of claim 33, wherein each column readout circuit further comprises a plurality of second switches which can be selectively enabled to hold one side of ~~[[the]]~~ said charge storage elements at a reference voltage when a corresponding one of ~~[[the]]~~ said first switches is enabled to sample a value from a sensor.

35. (Currently Amended) The processing system of claim 34, wherein each column readout circuit ~~includes~~ comprises a switch which selectively can be enabled to short together one side of each ~~charge storing element~~ plurality of charge storage elements.

36. (Currently Amended) The processing system of claim 35, further comprising column switches coupled between each of [[the]] said column readout circuits, wherein [[the]] said column switches can be selectively enabled to couple together [[the]] said stored pixel signal and reset values present on [[the]] said column of sensors in [[an]] said active pixel sensor.